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January 2011

Pope Benedict XVI

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Benedict XVI, Pope, "January 2011" (2011). *Marian Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI*. Paper 70.
http://ecommons.udayton.edu/imri_popes_benedict_xvi/70

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January 2011



Homily on the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy, Mother of God, and the World Day of Peace – January 1, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters, still enveloped in the spiritual atmosphere of Christmas, in which we have contemplated the mystery of the birth of Christ, today we celebrate with the same sentiments the Virgin Mary, whom the Church venerates as Mother of God, in that she gave flesh to the Son of the eternal Father....

In the second reading, St. Paul summarizes in filial adoption the work of salvation carried out by Christ, in which the figure of Mary is set. Thanks to her the Son of God, "born of woman" (Galatians 4:4), was able to come to the world as true man, in the fullness of time....

The passage of the Gospel ends today with the imposition of the name of Jesus, while Mary participates in silence, meditating in her heart on the mystery of this Son of hers, who in such a singular

way is a gift of God. However, the evangelical life that we have heard puts in particular evidence the shepherds, who returned "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen " (Luke 2:20). The angel had announced to them that in the city of David, namely, in Bethlehem, the Savior was born and that they would have found the sign: a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger (cf. Luke 2:11- 12). Leaving hastily, they found Mary and Joseph and the Child. Let us observe how the evangelist speaks of Mary's maternity beginning from the Son, from that "child wrapped in swaddling clothes," because it is he -- the Word of God (John 1:14) -- who is the point of reference, the center of the event that is taking place and it is he who makes Mary's maternity to be described as "divine." This greater attention that today's readings dedicate to the "Son," to Jesus, does not reduce the role of the Mother; on the contrary, it places her in the correct perspective: Mary, in fact, is true Mother of God precisely in virtue of her total relationship to Christ. Hence, by glorifying the Son, the Mother is honored, and by honoring the Mother, the Son is glorified. The title "Mother of God" that the liturgy highlights today underlines the unique mission of the Holy Virgin in the history of salvation: a mission that is at the base of the cult and devotion that the Christian people reserve to her. Mary, in fact, did not receive God's gift for herself, but to bring it to the world: In her fecund virginity, God gave men the goods of eternal salvation (cf. Collect). And Mary offers continually her mediation to the People of God, she continues giving divine life to men, which is Jesus himself and his Holy Spirit. Because of this she is considered mother of each man born of grace and at the same time is invoked as Mother of the Church.

It is in the name of Mary, Mother of God and of men, that since Jan 1, 1968, the World Day of Peace is celebrated throughout the world....

In this Eucharistic celebration we have before our eyes, for our veneration, the image of Our Lady of the Sacred Mount of Viggiano, so loved by the people of Basilicata. The Virgin Mary gives us her Son, shows us the face of her Son, Prince of Peace:

May she help us to remain in the light of this face, which shines over us (cf. Numbers 6:25), to rediscover all the tenderness of God the Father; may she sustain us in invoking the Holy Spirit, so that he will renew the face of the earth and transform hearts, undoing their hardness before the disarming goodness of the Child, who was born for us. May the Mother of God accompany us in this new year; may she obtain for us and for the whole world the desired gift of peace. Amen.

On the New Year: "Religious Liberty Is the Privileged Way to Build Peace" – Angelus Address, January 1, 2011

Dear Brothers and Sisters! In this first Angelus of 2011, I address to all my good wishes for peace and goodness entrusting them to the intercession of Mary Most Holy, who today we celebrate as Mother of God. At the beginning of a new year, the Christian People gather spiritually before the cave of Bethlehem, where the Virgin Mary has given birth to Jesus. Let us ask the Mother for a blessing, and she blesses us showing us the Son: in fact, he is the Blessing in person.

... Because of this, before the icon of the Virgin Mother, the Church on this day invokes from God, through Jesus Christ, the gift of peace: it is the World Day of Peace, propitious occasion to reflect together on the great challenges that our era poses to humanity.

... Dear friends, let us turn our gaze again to Jesus, in the arms of Mary, his Mother. Looking at Him, who is the "Prince of peace" (Isaiah 9:5), we understand that peace is not attained with arms, or with economic, political, cultural or media power. Peace is the work of consciences that open to truth and to love. May God help us to progress on this way in the new year that He gives us to live....

[In English, he said:]

... On the first day of the year the Church pays special honor to the Mother of God, recalling how in

humble obedience to the Lord's will she bore in her womb and gave birth to him who is the Light of the World. ...

On the Mystery of the Incarnation: "The Word Is a Living Reality" – Angelus Address, January 2, 2011

... Dear brothers and sisters, I ask you to be strong in love and to contemplate with humility the Mystery of Christmas that continues to speak to the heart and to become a school of family and fraternal life. The motherly gaze of the Virgin Mary, the loving protection of St Joseph and the sweet presence of the Baby Jesus are a clear image of what every Christian family must be: an authentic sanctuary of fidelity, respect and understanding in which faith is passed on, hope is strengthened and love is kindled. I encourage one and all to live the Christian vocation in your homes with renewed enthusiasm, as genuine servants of the love that welcomes, accompanies and protects life. Make your home a real nursery of virtues and a serene and luminous place of trust, in which, guided by God's grace, it is possible to discern wisely the call of the Lord who continues to invite people to follow him. With these sentiments I fervently commend to the Holy Family of Nazareth the resolutions and fruit of this meeting, so that there may be an increasing number of families in which joy, mutual giving and generosity hold sway. May God always bless you. Let us ask the Virgin Mary, whom the Lord entrusted as Mother to "the disciple whom Jesus loved," for the strength to behave as children "who were born ... of God" (cf. Jn 1:13), accepting one another and thereby expressing brotherly love.

[In English he said:]

... Today we continue to contemplate the divine mystery of Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary. He is the Word of God made flesh for our salvation, the Wisdom of God who has come to enlighten us. Let us always cherish this presence of Jesus who brings us grace and truth! I wish you all a

pleasant Sunday and renew my good wishes for a Happy New Year!

On the day of the Nativity: "The Liturgical Celebration of Christmas ... Is Not Only a Memory But Also a Presence" – General Audience, January 5, 2011

... Christmas is already the first fruit of the "sacramentum-mysterium paschale," that is to say, it is the beginning of the central mystery of salvation that culminates in the passion, death and resurrection, because Jesus begins to offer himself out of love from the first instance of his human existence in the womb of the Virgin Mary....

To appreciate the meaning of these two indissoluble aspects, one must live intensely the whole Christmas season as the Church presents it. If we consider it in a broad sense, it extends for forty days, from Dec. 25 to Feb. 2, from the celebration of Christmas Eve to Mary's Maternity, to the Epiphany, to the Baptism of Jesus, to the wedding of Cana, to the Presentation in the Temple, precisely in analogy with Eastertide, which forms a unity of fifty days, until Pentecost....

In English, he said:

... Jesus' humbling of himself, beginning with his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, will find its fullest expression in the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection....

Feast of Three Kings: "They Were Men 'in Search' of Something More" – Homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, January 6, 2011

... Becoming man in the womb of Mary, the Son of God came not only for the people of Israel, represented by the shepherds of Bethlehem, but also for the whole of humanity, represented by the Magi....

On the Epiphany: "To All Those Who Seek Truth, We Must Offer the Word of God" –

Angelus Address, January 6, 2011

... In fact, before the arrival of the Magi, knowledge of this event was little known beyond the family circle: in addition to Mary and Joseph, and probably other relatives, it was known by the shepherds of Bethlehem, who, hearing the joyful announcement, went to see the baby while he was still laying in the manger.... See the epiphany, the manifestation: the coming and the adoration of the Magi is the first sign of the singular identity of the son of God, who is also son of the Virgin Mary...

Once again, we feel in ourselves a profound gratitude to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. She is the perfect image of the Church which gives the world the light of Christ: she is the Star of evangelization. "Respice Stellam," Saint Bernard says to us: look at the Star, you who go in search of truth and peace; turn your gaze to Mary, and She will show you Jesus, light for every man and for all people.

On the Baptism of the Lord: "He, Who Is Without Sin, Lets Himself Be Treated as a Sinner" – Homily, January 9, 2011

... Entrusting them (twenty-one infants) to the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, we ask for them life and health so that they can grow and mature in the faith, and bear, with their lives, the fruits of holiness and love. Amen!

On Baptism: Gift and Responsibility – Angelus Address, January 9, 2011

... I would like to encourage all of the faithful to rediscover the beauty of being baptized and belonging to the great family of God, and to giving a joyous witness to their own faith so that they might bear the fruits of goodness and concord. We ask this through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, to whom we entrust the parents who are preparing their children for baptism and catechists as well.

May the whole community share in the joy of being

reborn by the water of the Holy Spirit! ... In the context of the Marian prayer, I would like to offer a special thought for the people of Haiti, one year after the terrible earthquake, which has unfortunately been followed by a grave cholera epidemic. (IV, 901)

"Original Cell of the Society Is the Family, Founded on Marriage Between a Man and Woman" - Address to the Mayor of Rome, January 14, 2011

... I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, above all for those who today begin their service to the common good, and while I invoke on your commitment the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, *Salus Populi Romani*, I impart to you my heartfelt Blessing, which I gladly extend to the inhabitants of Rome, of its Province and of the whole of Lazio.

On the World Day of Migrants and Refugees: "The Messiah, the Son of God Was a Refugee" – Angelus Address, January 16, 2011

... In turning to the Virgin Mary, with the "Angelus" prayer, we entrust to her protection all migrants and those who give them pastoral care. May Mary, Mother of the Church, obtain for us, moreover, to make progress in the journey toward the full communion of all disciples in Christ.

"Feel Beside You the Living Presence of the Risen Lord" - Address to Neocatechumenal Way, January 17, 2011

... Dear friends, let us share in the longing of salvation of the Lord Jesus, in the mission that He entrusts to the whole Church. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, who inspired your Way and who has given you the family of Nazareth as model of your community, grant you to live your faith in humility, simplicity and praise, may she intercede for all of you and accompany you in your mission. May you

also be sustained by my blessing, which I impart to you from my heart and to all the members of the Neocatechumenal Way spread around the world.

New Year's Greetings to Vatican Security – Address to the General Inspectorate for Public Security in the Vatican, January 17, 2011

... In the Christmas period, just ended, the liturgy invited us to receive the Word who from the beginning was in the heart of the Father and whom he has given us, revealing his face in a Child. He is the Eternal who enters into time and fills it with his fullness; he is the light that illumines and lightens all those that are in darkness; he is the Son of God who brings salvation to humanity. Let us always receive him with trust and joy! He is presented to us by the Virgin Mary. She, as a solicitous Mother, watches over us. Turn frequently to her maternal intercession and entrust to her the year 2011 that has just begun, so that it will be for everyone a time of hope and peace.

"Deepen Your Intellectual and Spiritual Preparation"- Address to Polish Ecclesiastical Institute, January 17, 2011

... Venerable and dear brothers, I entrust you all to the Virgin Mary, so loved by the Polish people. Invoke her always as mother of your priesthood, so that she will accompany you on the path of life and attract to your present and future ministry the abundance of gifts of the Holy Spirit. May Mary help you to persevere with joyful fidelity in the grace and commitment to follow Jesus, and to nurture constantly a fruitful dedication to your daily work and to those that the Lord puts close to you.

Praying for Christian Unity – General Audience, January 19, 2011

... You, parents, profoundly stricken by the death, often tragic, of your children, do not let yourselves be conquered by despair and despondency, but transform your suffering into hope, as Mary did at

the foot of the Cross.

**"The Time in Which We Live Is Suffused with
Profound Changes" - Address to Rome's Police,
January 21, 2011**

... Dear friends! When you are in service on the streets of Rome, and in your offices, think that your bishop, the Pope, prays for you, who loves you! I thank you for your visit, and entrust all to the protection of Mary Most Holy and of the Archangel St. Michael, your heavenly protector, while I impart from my heart to you and on your commitment a special Apostolic Blessing.

**"The Right to Contract Marriage Presupposes
That One Can Marry" - Address to Tribunal of
the Roman Rota, January 21, 2011**

... Dear members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, I entrust all of you to the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that you never lack divine assistance in carrying out your daily labors with fidelity, the spirit of service and with fruitfulness, and I gladly impart to all a special Apostolic Blessing.

**"Conversion to Christ Is the Way That Will
Lead ... to Full Visible Unity" – Angelus
Address, January 23, 2011**

... May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, always accompany us along this path.

In English he said:]

... Entrusting you to the care of Mary, Mother of the Church, I invoke upon you and your families God's abundant blessings.

**"We Are Still Far from That Unity for Which
Christ Prayed" - Homily to Close Prayer for
Christian Unity Week, Basilica of St. Paul's
Outside the Walls, January 25, 2011**

... Dear brothers and sisters, trusting in the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ and

Mother of the Church, we invoke, therefore, the gift of unity. United to Mary, who on the day of Pentecost was present in the Cenacle together with the Apostles, we turn to God source of every gift to have renewed for us today the miracle of Pentecost and, guided by the Holy Spirit, may all Christians re-establish full unity in Christ. Amen.

On St. Joan of Arc: "Joan's Judges ... Did Not Know They Were Condemning a Saint" – General Audience, January 26, 2011

... We could place her next to the holy women who stayed on Calvary, close to Jesus crucified, and Mary, his mother, while the apostles fled and Peter himself denied him three times. ... To the Name of Jesus is always joined the Name of Mary and thus, in the framework of popular religiosity, Joan's spirituality was profoundly Christocentric and Marian.... On March 22, 1429, Joan dictated an important letter to the king of England and his men who were besieging the city of Orleans (Ibid., p. 221- 222). Hers was a proposal of true peace in justice between the two Christian peoples, in light of the names of Jesus and Mary, but this proposal was rejected, and Joan had to commit herself in the fight for the liberation of the city, which took place on May 8.... I am pleased to recall how St. Joan of Arc had a profound influence on a young saint of the modern age: Thérèse of the Child Jesus. In a completely different life, spent in the cloister, the Carmelite of Lisieux felt very close to Joan, living in the heart of the Church and taking part in the sufferings of Jesus for the salvation of the world. The Church has joined them as patronesses of France, after the Virgin Mary.

On the Beatitudes as a Program of Life: "Teaching That Comes from Above and Touches the Human Condition" – Angelus Address, January 30, 2011

... Dear brothers and sisters, we invoke the Virgin Mary, the one who is Blessed par excellence, asking for the strength to seek the Lord (cf. Sophonias 2:3)

and to follow him always, with joy, on the path of the Beatitudes.